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CONGRESS GOVERNMENT AND AGRICULTURAL MEASURES
IN MADRAS STATE, 1961-1966



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ABSTRACT:

The Congress Government under the able leaderships of K.Kamaraj and Bhaktavatsalam initiated many measures in the sphere of Agriculture which included irrigation works and land reclamation works and increasing agrarian activities. In this regard, this paper attempts to highlight , the agricultural measures of the Congress Government in Madras State during the period of K.Kamaraj and Bhaktavatsalam as Chiefministers of Madras State respectively from 1961 to 1966.

Kamaraj, the farsighted statesman was a pragmatist and looked at everything in a broader perspective of the welfare of the people and state. His chiefminstership in a critical period of young independent country put the Madras State in the right perspective of many sided and multifaceted developments. Economically, socially, educationally he brought the Tamil State to the forefront. His cordial relationship and political influence with the Central Government allowed him to lead the State in the right track of development and growth. He was able to utilize all the resources for appropriate progress. He laid the foundation for the strong placement of Tamil Nadu at the agricultural forefront due to his progressive policies and forward vision and idealism. By setting aside conservatism he stood for the progressivism in agrarian sector in its real sense.

KEYWORDS

Agriculture, Irrigation, Dam, Land, Food, Madras, Co-operative Societies, K.Kamaraj, Bhaktavatsalam.

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STEP TOWARDS ENHANCED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

As soon as assumed charge as Chief Minister, K.Kamaraj had to face many hardships due to various reasons. Particularly agriculture was at stake and caused difficulties. The agricultural yields was falling due to the lack of monsoon rain. Drought condition prevailed and cost of food materials shoot up. The Government could not devote totally to remove the calamitous situation. The efforts undertaken for enhanced production became futile. By introducing many new schemes through co-operative undertakings and crash programmes, the Congress Government was able to bring additional quantum of lands into cultivation for increasing the agricultural yield. Subsidies were also announced for increasing production. The farmers were encouraged to enhance production. Fair price shops were opened for developing the measures of distribution at controlled rates. To cater to the needs of the public regarding the supply of food stuffs efforts were undertaken by the Government for purchasing the required quantity of grains from outside the state. The cultivators were encouraged to improve the production by payment of loans and subsidies.¹ But such measures were only temporary remedies and no complete solution was turned out.

THIRD FIVE YEAR PLAN AND CO-OPERATIVE ENDEAVORS

The Third Five Year Plan also stressed on promoting agriculture. The co-operative supply and marketing societies played a significant role in the area of distribution. It was targeted to produce 59 lakh tones of paddy. Credit Societies were constituted as a branch measure of the Co-operative Supply and Marketing Societies. The Co-operative endeavours employed by the Government and the steps taken through the third Five Year Plan yielded some positive results.² But they were not sufficient. The marketing Societies also widened its prospects in dealing with cotton, groundnut, cashew nut etc. under the Seed Multiplication Scheme introduced during 1963.³ By this scheme a total of 15,000 acres of fresh lands were brought under cultivation in Trichy District.⁴ High yielding variety of long stem cotton was cultivated in 1000 acres in Coimbatore District.⁵ Good quality seeds were also distributed for enabling a good yield. But all such efforts did not solve the problem effectively.

CONSUMER'S CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

During the third Five Year Plan period, consumer's co-operative societies were also formed to maintain the price level in a constant stage. This was a measure employed to promote equitable. Different varieties of co-operative stores were also established to promote the distribution acts in a proper way. This measure was undertaken at a phased programme. Long sizes whole sale stores were established at many major cities such as Madras, Tiruchi, Madurai, Coimbatore, Salem, Vellore, Tuticorin, Nagercoil etc. They made the people to get materials at normal prices without much difficulties. Due to the introduction of the supply system through co-operative measures during 1962-93, the people were able to get goods worth of Rs.209 lakhs.⁶ The Co-operative movement launched for distribution was beneficial to the public and the turn over also increased considerably. The following two year's assistance will attest it.

Year	Amount
1965-66	Rs. 47 crores
1966-1967	Rs.52 crores

EXTENSION OF CO-OPERATIVE MEASURES

Subsequently Bhaktavatsalam Ministry extended the co-operative measures to the rural areas also. The Reserve Bank of India too offered its share in solving the financial crisis of the State. It offered a loan of Rs.277.50 lakhs to the Co-operative Societies functioning in Madras. The Government also came forward and opened 27 branches of Co-operative Societies in rural areas. Rs.45 lakhs was allotted to be spent for co-operative endeavours in rural areas.⁷ Without any profit motive the Government came forward to satisfy the needs of the rural public through co-operative measures. Many steps were taken to distribute consumer goods at fair prices through co-operative societies. The Consumer's Co-operative societies gained significance and turned out to be a tremendous force in the state during calamitous situations. Due to the measures undertaken by the Wholesale Supply Societies formed by the Government, the people gained a lot. In 1964, 2500 Rural Societies and 500 fair price shops were functioning and the turnover crossed nearly Rs.82 lakhs.⁸ In addition to the above to maintain stock of rice to be used at critical junctures the Madras Government procured one lakh tones of rice compulsorily from the producers directly.⁹ During the end of the year 1964-65, the Government had invested Rs.50 crores in the Regulated Marketing Scheme by opening 103 regulated markets. By such measures nearly 85% of the rural population were able to gain the benefits of co-operative endeavours.¹⁰ Various States of India such as Madhya Pradesh, Orissa etc. came forward to rescue the State of Tamil Nadu from its drought conditions. Rice was imported from those States. Mill Owners were approached by the State Government directly and 10% of the need was collected from them.¹¹ Arrangements were also made to get wheat from the United States of America. As decided by the Government the following quantity of paddy was procured.¹²

1964-65	-	3.22 lakh tonnes
1965-66	-	3.47 lakh tonnes

INTRODUCTION OF FAMILY RATION SYSTEM

Another measure undertaken by the Congress Government was the introduction of family ration system through ration card. This system was put into operation in districts like Madras, Salem, Coimbatore, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari.¹³ The selling rate of rice was fixed at 88 paise per kg. Further M. Bhaktavatsalam appointed a Vigilance Cell in the Board of Revenue to estimate the price situation in Tamil Nadu. Importance and priority was provided for increased production of agricultural commodities. All the above measures were undertaken under humanitarian considerations and the Congress Government never worried about finance. Farm Management Schemes were also introduced. Steps were taken to bring number of lands under intensive cultivations.¹⁴ These measures of the Congress Government assisted the farmers to improve the agricultural yield.

PROMOTION OF AGRARIAN AND IRRIGATION ACTIVITIES

Steps were taken to promote agricultural activities with promoted irrigation facilities. Steps were also taken to promote reservoirs, canals and dams. Desilting and deepening process of tanks were also introduced. The foundation stone was laid for Chittar Pittanam Project by K. Kamaraj, the All India Congress Committee President on 26 September 1963 and the estimated cost was Rs.680 lakhs. By this scheme single crop system was introduced in 13,000 acres of lands in Tirunelveli District and double crop system was put into operation by irrigating 15,000 acres of lands in Kanyakumari District.¹⁵ To promote the agriculture, Kodayar River Project and Perunchany Dam across Paraliyar were inaugurated by K. Kamaraj on 15th April 1964.¹⁶ In the same year many other schemes were also undertaken. For instance, the Manimukthnathi Reservoir Project in Kallidaikkurichi was constructed at the cost of Rs.91 lakhs. The Gatana Reservoir Scheme in Ambasamudram Taluk was finished at the cost of Rs.89 lakhs.¹⁷ A number of urban water supply schemes were also introduced to the tune of Rs.285 lakhs. Rs. 180 lakhs was provided for water supply and drainage scheme for the Madras Corporation and Rs.26 lakhs was appropriated for water supply schemes by different Municipalities.¹⁸ The Parambikulam Aliyar Dam was completed in 1965 and it offered irrigation facilities for one lakhs acres of land in Coimbatore District.¹⁹ Thus by enhanced means of irrigation steps were taken to enhance the quantum of cultivable lands and also to increase production in the existing areas.

LAND RECLAMATION MEASURES

In addition to the provisions for the irrigation facilities the Congress Government under Bhaktavatsalam paid attention on land reclamation processes also. By providing sufficient water facilities through the Solaiar Dam, Tirumurthi Dam, Sarkarappatti Tunnel schemes etc land reclamation processes were undertaken. This offered water facilities to nearly 2.4 lakhs acres in the arid tacks of Coimbatore District.²⁰ The Parambikulam Tunakkadvu and Tirumurthi dams were completed in 1966 and they assisted the irrigation facilities for 45,000 acres land.²¹ For construction of Palar Anaicut and to introduce Gomukinathi Project, a sum of Rs.258 lakhs was allotted.²² Under Rs.65 lakhs, the Manjalar Dam came into being.²³ To help the farmers of the Perambalur Taluk with the use of Koneri river, reservoirs were also constructed at the cost of Rs.7.73 lakhs. To make changes and for remodelling the channel irrigation and to promote the Kaveri Delta irrigation, a sum of Rs. 12 crores was allotted. A sum of Rs. 4 lakhs was assigned for remodelling the Vaigai Project.²⁴ In the same way by the facilities provided for the Upper Bhavani Irrigation Scheme alone, one lakh and ten thousand acres of lands were brought under cultivation.²⁵ Beyond these efforts many new schemes and programmes were also implemented.

NEW AGRARIAN SCHEMES

New Agrarian Schemes were also introduced to put an end to the food problem. The Crash programme, the Package Programme, Mixed Farming were also introduced. By introducing the crash programme at an estimate of Rs.1.5 acres for a period of two years between 1964 and 1965 the following output yield was expected per year.²⁶

Food grains	-	1,25,000 tonnes
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Cotton	-	12,500 bales
Groundnut	-	30,000 tonnes

During 1964-65 two lakh acres of dry lands were utilised for agriculture under the Intensive Cultivation Scheme.²⁷ This Intensive Cultivation Scheme was introduced in Chingelput, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli Districts. Altogether in 123 Community Development Blocks this Intensive Cultivation Scheme was introduced and Extension Officers were employed in this regard. Since loans were granted for the farmers as an incentive as a result the agriculture production increased. Through this scheme, fertilizers, chemicals and seeds were also supplied. The following use of the quantity of fertilizers will testify to the enthusiasm shown by the government in promoting agriculture.²⁸

1961-62	-	1.3 lakh tones
1962-63	-	2.75 lakh tones
1963-64	-	3.25 lakh tones

Further to promote the new variety of short term paddy called A.D. T.27 a sum of four lakhs of rupees was allocated. Steps were taken to sink 1600 existing wells and to dig 80,000 more new wells. For sinking 2000 filter tube wells in the Thanjavur district a sum of Rs.37 lakhs was also sanctioned.²⁹ Electricity connections were assigned to run 1.35 lakhs of pumpsets during 1965-66.³⁰ Almost all the districts were benefited by this. Nearly 12 crores of rupees were appropriated for promoting agriculture during the fourth plan period. Loan facilities were also provided for agriculturists of different districts. Incentives were also granted for production of paddy.³¹ Thus steps were taken to promote agricultural yield in all possible ways.

By the Master Plan instituted in 1963-64, the Seed Multiplication Programme of 1964 and also by Package Programme the agricultural production was increased. But no surplus was achieved and the needs of the people were satisfied to some extent.

The Congress Party which assumed power in Madras State and formed Government which promoted the agrarian activities and irrigation works. The Ministry of K.Kamaraj and Bhaktavatsalam took interest and initiatives to expand land cultivation with the aim to increasing production of agricultural crops. Many agricultural schemes were introduced which helped the peasants and cultivators to bring the fallow land under cultivation. The Congress Government utilized the Five Year Plans for the economic development of the Madras State. Equal emphasis was given to both agricultural and industrial development in the Madras State.

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